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Answer of 5/25/51

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Greene, J D

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50 STATE STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

MAR 5 1952

AG 5/24/51 AG 5/25

June 17, 1946

Dear Gregg,

Your demi-tasse has been lying on my desk for a long time though I read it soon after it was received. I have been waiting, however, for more leisure than I have had during the past two months to offer the comments you have invited. Before making them, however, I should like to say that you have produced a valuable document for the archives of the Foundation, for I think your characterizations are remarkably apt and accurate, though susceptible of both amendment and enlargement. You will find my comments not exactly laudatory in some cases, though the points at which I have found fault are not incompatible with the excellent qualities of the men about whom they are made. Here they are as they now occur to me:

I am glad to have your favorable and specific comments on Vincent. Not having served under him I did not know him well but I was convinced from the very time of his employment, which incidentally displaced me in the service of the Foundation, that he was the very man for the place and he did a far better job in making the Foundation known and inspiring the confidence of the public than I could possibly have done. His administration came at exactly the right time, but it is well and also inevitable that his successors should have qualities different from his own. I never thought that he understood what research meant and that he consequently underestimated its importance. This I attribute to his Chautauqua background in which the dissemination of knowledge rather than its discovery had all the emphasis.

I think that all that you say about Gates is good and true, but I should qualify it as follows:

As an omniverous reader of important books in his later life he acquired an education that was beyond the ordinary. At the same time I think he showed the lack of liberal education in his youth, which is the time for liberal education. He was apt to be carried away by a new idea derived from his reading and would air it on all occasions - even in a meeting of railroad directors. When I say that he was carried away by a new idea, I also mean that he was carried away by his own eloquence. One of his most passionate utterances in a meeting of the General Education Board related to the commendable idea of creating centers throughout the United States where the work of the public schools, the farmers and public health should be united in a grand utopian crusade. The speech made such an impression that it was printed and widely circulated, but it was soon forgotten. He was a terrific special pleader, as for example, his advocacy at times of doing nothing until a general policy had been adopted, and at other times of avoiding general policy by dealing concretely with situations in an opportunist manner. At the outbreak of the First world war, he told the Trustees that

he believed that John D. Rockefeller had been raised up by Divine Providence for just that emergency and that the entire capital of the Rockefeller Foundation should be made available for purposes of relief. Within two years he turned down a modest proposal by Whitcliff Rose, our trusted agent in Europe in connection with war relief, when its acceptance would have brought millions of government money, German and Russian, into relief work which was to the interest of both, the Rockefeller Foundation spending no money except in providing a neutral administration. Having said all this I repeat what I have often said, namely, no man in the United States is more deserving of a monument than Gates, for the ideas and the persuasive powers to which the establishment of the Rockefeller Institute, the General Education Board and the Rockefeller Foundation were largely due. He has his monument in what those institutions have already accomplished.

The combination of the Rockefellers, Senior and Junior, with Mr. Gates had an importance for "the welfare of mankind throughout the world" that it would be impossible to exaggerate. All the other personalities to which your memorandum refers had the lesser role of instruments of that great triumvirate.

J.D.R.